

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8421

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 4614

DEPT PLEASE PASS ALSO TO PEACE CORPS AND AID; AID FOR NE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, AF, US
SUBJECT: U.S. ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN: MEETING WITH MINISTER
OF PLANNING, SULTAN ALI KISHTMAND

1. SUMMARY: ACCOMPANIED BY THE AID AND PEACE CORPS DIRECTORS, I MADE MY FIRST CALL ON THE NEW MINISTER OF PLANNING, SULTAN ALI KISHTMAND ON JUNE 4. WE DISCUSSED THE STATUS OF THE AID AND PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN, PROJECT ISSUES, THE WORLD BANK ECONOMIC REPORT AND HUMAN RIGHTS. THE MINISTER SAID HE WANTED OUR AID PROGRAMS TO CONTINUE, PARTICULARLY IN THE HELMAND VALLEY; STATED HE UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED THE GOVERNMENT'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER EXISTING AID PROJECT AGREEMENTS; PRAISED THE WORLD BANK ECONOMIC REPORT; AND WAS NON-COMMITTAL ON HUMAN RIGHTS. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCOMPANIED BY THE AID AND PEACE CORPS DIRECTORS, I MADE MY INITIAL CALL ON THE NEW MINISTER OF PLANNING, SULTAN ALI KISHTMAND, AT HIS OFFICE ON JUNE 4, LESS THAN 24 HOURS AFTER REQUESTING THE MEETING FROM THE OFFICE OF PROTOCOL.

3. FOLLOWING OPENING PLEASANTRIES, I ASKED THE MINISTER
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WHAT HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WERE, AND THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS HE ENVISAGED FOR ADDRESSING THEM. THE MINISTER AVOIDED DIRECTLY ANSWERING MY QUESTION, AND PLEASANTLY, IF ABRUPTLY, SHIFTED THE CONVERSATION TO WHAT WAS OBVIOUSLY ON HIS OWN MIND. HE SAID THAT INASMUCH AS THE AID DIRECTOR WAS ALSO PRESENT, PERHAPS THEY COULD DISCUSS SOME IMMEDIATE AID PROJECT ISSUES. HE THEN

REFERRED TO THE HELMAND VALLEY AND NOTED THAT USAID HAD A TWENTY MILLION DOLLAR DRAINAGE PROJECT OF WHICH ONLY TEN MILLION DOLLARS HAD BEEN COMMITTED. HE SAID HE HOPED WE COULD MOVE AHEAD QUICKLY WITH THIS PROJECT, SPECIFICALLY WITH OUR CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT ORDER FOR HCC. HE SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT GAVE A VERY HIGH PRIORITY TO THIS PROJECT. HE THEN REVIEWED VERY GENERALLY HIS GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPING THE HELMAND VALLEY. HE NOTED THE ON-GOING PROJECT TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF THE KAJAKAI DAM AND SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HOPED TO HAVE ANOTHER DAM CONSTRUCTED ABOVE THE EXISTING ARGHANDAB DAM TO INCREASE WATER AND POWER AVAILABILITIES THERE ALSO. WITH THIS ADDITIONAL WATER, HE SAID NEW AREAS COULD BE IRRIGATED, REFERRING SOMEWHAT VAGUELY TO AREAS NORTH OF GIRISHK AND SPECIFICALLY TO THE SHAMALAN AND DARWESHAN AREAS. HE SAID HE HOPED THE U.S. COULD ALSO FINANCE THESE DEVELOPMENTS.

4. THE AID DIRECTOR BRIEFLY OUTLINED SOME OF THE IMPLEMENTATION DIFFICULTIES THAT WERE SERIOUSLY HAMPERING PROGRESS ON THE HELMAND PROJECT, INCLUDING HAVA'S AMBIGUOUS STATUS AND AUTHORITY, ITS AWKWARD RESPONSIBILITIES TO THREE MINISTRIES, CONTRACTING DIFFICULTIES WITH HCC AND, MOST CRITICALLY, FAILURE TO WORK OUT SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTING ON-FARM DRAINS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE EQUIPMENT WOULD NOT AFFECT THE SOLUTION OF THESE PROBLEMS--IT BEING WELL OVER A YEAR BEFORE IT COULD ARRIVE IN AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE BEST OF CONFIDENTIAL

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CIRCUMSTANCES. HE SAID HE WOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THESE IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS IN MORE DETAIL WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE MINISTER SAID THAT THE STATUS OF HAVA WAS BEING REGULARIZED AND THAT IT WOULD BE MADE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE. HOWEVER, THE MINISTER SUGGESTED WE DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE MINISTER OF WATER AND POWER REGARDING ANY PROBLEMS WITH THE HCC AND FRAM DRAIN CONSTRUCTION. HE AGAIN STRESSED THAT HE HOPED WE COULD MOVE AHEAD WITH THE EQUIPMENT ORDER.

5. WITH RESPECT TO THE MINISTER'S SUGGESTION THAT AID FUND OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE HELMAND VALLEY, THE AID DIRECTOR SAID THAT HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS ANY PROPOSALS. HE THEN BRIEFLY EXPLAINED AID'S LEGISLATIVE MANDATE AND THE LIMITATIONS THIS IMPLIED FOR HEAVY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, SUCH AS THE CONSTRUCTION OF DAMS, AND SUGGESTED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS, TO WHICH THE U.S. WAS THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR, WERE A MORE APPROPRIATE SOURCE FOR THESE KINDS OF ACTIVITIES. HE ALSO NOTED THAT WITH REGARD TO SOME OF THE AREAS THE MINISTER HAD MENTIONED FOR POSSIBLE AID INVOLVEMENT, SUCH AS THE WEST KAJAKAI, ADVANCED DISCUSSIONS WERE UNDER WAY BETWEEN THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT AND OTHER

DONORS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ADB WAS IN THE ADVANCE STAGE OF PROJECT NEGOTIATION IN THE SERAJ AND WEST KAJAKAI AREA. THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE, NEVERTHELESS, HOPED THAT THE U.S. WOULD GET INVOLVED BECAUSE OF OUR VERY CONSIDERABLE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE IN THE AREA.

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6. THE AID DIRECTOR THEN BRIEFLY DESCRIBED THE STATUS OF EACH AID PROJECT, NOTING OUTSTANDING ISSUES, AND GAVE THE MINISTER A WRITTEN SUMMARY OF THESE. HE ASKED IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD REVIEWED ON-GOING AID PROJECT AGREEMENTS AND UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED THE TERMS AND OBLIGATIONS OF THESE AGREEMENTS. THE MINISTER RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY BUT SAID THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT WISH IN SOME INSTANCES TO PROPOSE MINOR AMENDMENTS.

7. THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR BRIEFLY REVIEWED ON-GOING VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES IN DIFFERENCE PROJECT AREAS AS WELL AS PROPOSALS WHICH WERE UNDER DISCUSSION WITH OTHER MINISTRIES, PROVIDING THE MINISTER WITH A WRITTEN SUMMARY OF EACH. HE ALSO REQUESTED CLARIFICATION OF THE PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE FUTURE FOR OFFICIAL DRA APPROVAL OF REQUESTS FOR PC VOLUNTEERS. THE MINISTER RESPONDED THAT WHILE HE WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN THE PAST, WE SHOULD REVIEW THE MATTER WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION DEPARTMENT. I NOTED THAT IT WAS OUR POLICY TO ENCOURAGE CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN AID AND PEACE CORPS AND I HOPED, IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE BY HIS GOVERNMENT, THAT SUCH JOINT ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE WORKED OUT IN AFGHANISTAN. THE MINISTER AGREED THAT SUCH COOPERATION WAS A POSSIBILITY, AND THAT

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IT WOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN FUTURE PLANNING.

8. NOTING THAT THE WORLD BANK HAD JUST RECENTLY COMPLETED ITS ANALYSIS OF THE AFGHANISTAN ECONOMY, I ASKED THE MINISTER WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE REPORT. THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE HAD READ THE REPORT PRIOR TO THE REVOLUTION AND THAT IT WAS VERY HIGHLY REGARDED BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HE SAID "IT WAS ALMOST AS THOUGH WE HAD WRITTEN IT OURSELVES".

9. I NEXT EXPLAINED OUR VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. I SAID THAT THIS WAS A WORLDWIDE CONCERN OF THE UNITED STATES TO WHICH OUR GOVERNMENT ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE. THE MINISTER, NOTICEABLY UNEASY, INTERJECTED THAT HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH OUR POSITION AS A SENSITIVE EAST-WEST ISSUE. I SAID IT WAS MUCH MORE THAN AN EAST-WEST ISSUE; IF THERE WAS ANYTHING THE UNITED STATES STOOD FOR, IT WAS INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS. I NOTED THAT IT AFFECTED OUR RELATIONS WITH A VARIETY OF TYPES OF GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING CHILE AND KOREA AS WELL AS RUSSIA. I EXPLAINED THE AID LEGISLATION AS IT RELATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND GAVE HIM A COPY OF THE PERTINENT LANGUAGE OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT.

10. IN CLOSING, I ASKED THE MINISTER HOW WE SHOULD FOLLOW UP ON SPECIFIC PROJECT ISSUES. HE SAID THAT EITHER HE OR HIS STAFF WOULD GET BACK TO US QUICKLY REGARDING THE PENDING PROJECT ISSUES MENTIONED.

11. COMMENT: THE MINISTER WAS FRIENDLY AND PLEASANT THROUGHOUT THE MEETING. HE CLEARLY WANTED AID TO CONTINUE ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE HELMAND VALLEY, PLACING PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT COMPONENT OF THE CURRENT AID PROJECT AND THE EXPANSION OF OUR CAPITAL ASSISTANCE TO OTHER
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PROJECTS IN THE AREA. WHILE HE TRIED TO MAINTAIN AN EFFICIENT AND BUSINESS-LIKE ATTITUDE THROUGHOUT THE MEETING, HE DID NOT APPEAR FAMILIAR WITH ANY OF THE AID PROJECTS EXCEPT THE HELMAND, AND EVEN WITH REGARD TO THIS, HIS KNOWLEDGE WAS SHALLOW AND SOMETIMES INACCURATE.
END COMMENT.
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